Interview 1

Interview with Shelly Otis, Haw Creek Elementary School Counselor

Shari Frankel

Liberty University

Interview 2

*Interview Transcript*

**1.How many years have you been a professional counselor?**

11 years total. Six in Alabama, Five at Chestatee here in Georgia, and now I am starting off the new school here at Haw Creek.

**2.Describe your specific role(s) as a professional school counselor.**

I support the academic, personal, social and career needs of the students.

**3.Describe your specific role(s) as a professional school counselor as they relate to consultation.**

I consult with parents, staff, outside agencies, county office staff, and students.

**4.Describe your specific role(s) as a professional school counselor as they relate to collaboration.**

Everything involves collaboration(she emphasized this). Students need assessment (with teachers) to decide on topics-some are pre-determined by the county. Students can be referred to small groups through the SST- Student Support Team, IEP’s and parents assist with this as well.

**5.Describe your specific role(s) as a professional school counselor as they relate to referral.**

When working at Chestatee, they created their own list with Medicaid Insurance, mostly poor population. They used networking more than they used a list. The list they did have was used for suicidal and homicidal consisting of free consultations.

**6.What is the mission statement/philosophy of this particular school counseling program?**

Following the ASCA model, a school counselor is supposed to assess the school and it’s dynamics before coming up with a mission statement. Since this school is brand new, they need to first establish themselves for a year, they will not just make one up. The mission statement form Chestatee was:

Mission: It is the goal of the counseling program at Chestatee to offer support services to the students, parents, staff, and community.

School Counselors at Chestatee help promote and enhance long-term student learning through the application of the ASCA model. We help students in three major domains, academic, personal/social & career.

**7.Do you have a School Counselor/Administration Agreement that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the school counselor?**

We do not have one from Haw Creek yet, but I have one from Chestatee. (She gave me that one).

**8.How are students be assigned to school counselors to ensure every student has access to the program and acquires the pre-determined competencies?**

Interview 3

Each counselor is assigned grade levels, but they help each other out when necessary. Specific goals are set up at the beginning of the school year. Everyone has access through classroom guidance, every student must be in class when this is going on. They do not perform this guidance while individuals from the class are out in a resource classroom, they wait until all students are present, then schedule these instructional. Small groups are determined by referrals and space.

**9.What type of services does this school counseling program provide? What amount of time is spent delivering guidance lessons, providing indivivual student planning, delivering responsive services and managing system support?**

The counselors spend time going over rumor prevention in the 4th and 5th grades. For the personal-social aspect, they utilize the Ouveus Bullying Program.

**10.Do you use informed consents for services? How are they used?**

We do informed consents, but not on paper. We use a slide presentation, explain that if they verbally say something, we will have to speak with someone else about it to let them know.

**11.How are you compensated for work beyond contract hours?**

I’m not.

**12.What budget is available to purchase the necessary materials and supplies to implement the program? What are the funding sources for the program?**

Mostly we get money from the school. Right now because of the economy, funds are tight. We get money from the county based on the number of counselors each school has. We have one and a half right now. Mostly you have to seek out money. I wrote a mini grant and received $500. At Haw Creek we have a great PTA, so monies are received that way as well.

**13.Does your school provide time and financial assistance for attendance at local or state conferences related to your field?**

When I won the RAMP award (recognized ASCA model program)they paid for me to go to Dallas. I have also gone to Vegas in the past. Now with the way the economy is, they request that you do teleconferences and online programs which are a lot less money.

**14. What do you do for your own professional development?**

I attend the Georgia School Counselor conference. I have also presented with a co-counselor with play therapy which had been paid for personally.

**15. Is the program evaluated? How is the program evaluated?**

The program is evaluated each year with an ASCA audit. Also the county does an online survey of parents and students.

Interview 4

**16. How often do you meet with the school counseling team, with administration, with school staff and with the advisory council?**

The counseling team meets daily. The share team, which consists of the school social worker, school psychologist, school nurse and staff meet one hour per month. At Chestatee we met four times per year, we have not had more than six months here, so it it still a work in progress.

**17. Who decides how support services for the counseling team will be provided and organized? Please explain.**

SSS (Student Support Services) Director at the county offices make these decisions. The director’s assistant is my “go-to” gal, she is the one that is focused on the counselors, since the director supports the social workers and school psychologists as well.

**18. Who provides responsive services if counselor is delivering the scheduled curriculum?**

We leave the class, making sure the teacher or another adult can be with the class.

**19. Does your school have a crisis management plan? Were you part of writing it? Implementing it?**

I am on the safety Team, and I am also a part of the review committee, since we are constantly updating it. We meet and coordinate with the school Safety Director, the County Office Supervisor, and Administrators from other schools.

**20. To what extent, if any, are human services in your program expected to perform what you would consider to be non-school counselor functions?**

It is debatable whether car rider and bus rider duty are our responsibility or not. We are a liason to the community when it comes to philanthropy in connection with the school social worker. We prefer the teachers do not get involved since they tend to make assumptions that are quick to offend.

**21. What types of professionals are employed in the school counseling program? What type of training/ education etc. is needed?**

You have to have a Masters in School counseling in Ga., or other counseling w/t add on w/t certification. You must pass the Praxis for School Counseling.

**22. What aspects of your job do you consider the most rewarding?**

Seeing change in a situation whether academically, financially, or otherwise. To see change toward improvement, or helped to cope with home life even if the situation hasn’t changed.

**23. What aspects of your job do you consider the least rewarding?**

The misperception of parents and what they think a school counselor is actually for as a professional. There is a lack of respect sometimes because it is still a misunderstood profession.

Interview 5

**24. What are some of the challenges the school counselor encounters in this setting?**

Unhappy parents, the CONTROL factor, and difficult staff members that can make things complicated.

**25. How should current school counseling program be changed to better meet the needs of those who are served?**

More public relations for community and parents. Empathy and learning styles training for staff to follow ASCA model. The aratio of 1:350 is not realistic, the expectations are too hard, making 70% attainable.

**26. What was an unexpected surprise about your job that you didn’t learn in school?**

You can’t be taught in school how to let go of things. You need to gain experience first hand, get too involved, and get hurt in order to create your boundaries.

**27. What advice do you have for a future school counseling professional?**

Decide what age group you would like to work with, the duties are very different.